

# The Commoner.

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## Mr. Knox on Trusts.

On another page will be found the abstract of Attorney General Knox's anti-trust recommendations recently given to the public. While they go farther than he has gone before, they come far short of what was reasonably expected of the law officer of the government. He seems worried lest there may be unnecessary severity and says that "it is not nearly so important to act quickly as to act wisely," assuming that it is impossible to do both. He recommends action along four lines: First, the prohibition of rebates and discriminations by railroads. This is good as far as it goes, but the legislation should be even broader and prevent extortionate rates as well as discriminating rates. His second recommendation is that corporations should be prohibited from making discriminations in prices for the purpose of destroying competition. This also is worthy of trial, but does not go to the cause of the trouble. Mr. Knox is trying to cut off a few branches, but he does not lay the ax to the root of the trust tree. He does not declare the principle of private monopoly to be bad and undertake to make such a monopoly impossible. He would attempt to strike at some of the methods of the monopoly instead of seeking its entire extermination.

His third recommendation is so reasonable that it ought to meet with universal approval, namely, that anti-trust cases should be given precedence by the court and tried at once. Surely a case involving all the rights of all the people deserves a more speedy hearing than a case in which only a few persons are interested. The *Commoner* has already discussed this phase of the subject, saying in the issue of December 12, 1902: "He (the president) grossly exaggerates the work of the department of justice, when he says that it has done 'very much in securing the enforcement of the anti-trust law.' It could not well have done less. He suggests that it could have done 'more' if a special appropriation were made for the purpose. By all means, let the special appropriation be made, and while it is being made let the courts be instructed to give immediate attention to suits brought by the government for the violation of the anti-trust law. Certainly an offense by a corporation against an entire country should be given precedence over suits of minor importance."

The fourth recommendation is publicity and this, as has already been pointed out, is only valuable as an aid to other legislation.

On the whole, his communication must be disappointing to those who expected vigorous action on the part of the administration, but there is some consolation in the fact that public opinion is forcing some action, even though the officer of the law advances with slow and hesitating step.

Mr. Knox does not explain why he fails to enforce the criminal section of the existing law, but that is another matter.

## Initiative and Referendum.

The *Chronicle* (Chicago) has had another opportunity to show its leaning toward capitalism and it has hastened to improve it. The people of that city having at the last election declared for the initiative and referendum and both Mayor

Harrison and Judge Dunne having spoken in favor of the reform, the *Chronicle* at once proceeds to castigate them for taking sides with the people. "Political lunacy" is again called into service to describe the movement, Harrison is accused of "pandering" to it and Judge Dunne of "playing" to those who voted for it. It substitutes epithets for arguments and declamation for facts. Why? Because it cannot oppose either the initiative or the referendum without denying the capacity of the people for self-government. The initiative makes it possible for the people to compel the submission of a question and the referendum enables the people to pass upon a measure after the legislative body has acted—certainly no one can reasonably object to so democratic a reform.

What is the secret cause of the *Chronicle's* opposition? It is to be found in another column of the same issue in an editorial condemning municipal ownership of municipal franchises. It professes to see great dangers ahead if the people undertake to own and operate the natural monopolies now farmed out to private corporations. It seeks to scarce the people into subjection to the syndicates that corrupt city councils and prey upon the public.

Nothing better illustrates the attitude of most of the great dailies. They are either owned by big financiers, as the *Chronicle* is, or are controlled by mortgagees who use their influence to defend all kinds of exploitation. If the *Chronicle* will publish the name of its principal stockholder and state the amount of stock he owns in corporations holding municipal franchises and the amount he and his bank hold as security for loans, the people can tell whether the editorial advice given in that paper is disinterested. A witness is always questioned as to his interest in the case because the influence of interest is always recognized; why should financiers hide behind an impersonal newspaper corporation in order to advance their pecuniary interests? The opponents of the initiative and referendum may be divided into three classes, those who do not understand the subject, those who distrust the people, and those who have pecuniary interests adverse to the public—but the reform will yet triumph through the education of the first class.

## A Wall Street View.

The attention of the editor of *The Commoner* has been called to an utterance of the *New York Financial Record* in its issue of September 24. It is so candid a statement of the views of those who speak for Wall street that it is reproduced for the edification of the readers of *The Commoner*. It would be well to mark this passage and show it to a republican neighbor occasionally, just to convince him of the real sentiment that prevails among the financiers.

Most of the republicans do not belong to the "wealth" mentioned by the *Record*, and while they are intelligent they do not belong to the "intelligence" to which the *Record* refers. That "intelligence" is very limited in numbers and doesn't include the ordinary man who works on the farm, in the country store or in the workshop. It only includes those men who have that special form of intelligence which manifests itself in the cornering of markets and in the exploitation of the wealth-producer. The *Record's* interesting article may be found on another page of this issue.

## Christian Citizenship.

Rev. S. M. Johnson of Chicago has started out on a crusade to arouse the Christian conscience to an appreciation of the duties of Christian citizenship, and has formulated what he calls "The Creed of Christian Patriotism," which reads as follows:

I believe that human governments are ordained of God, are bound in all their acts by His law, are essential to human welfare and are, therefore, to be loyally upheld.

I believe that Christ's law, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," binds me to the intelligent and faithful performance of my full duty as a citizen.

I believe that that duty includes the following:

The payment of all taxes justly assessed against me.

The study of the questions to be decided at the polls.

The knowledge of the several political districts in which I reside, and the records of the various candidates.

To register and vote, and to exert a positive influence at every general and primary election, so far as I may, for the triumph of righteous men and measures.

To take an active interest in public affairs and in my country's history and welfare.

Thus believing, everywhere and always, the first affections of my heart and the first labor of my hands, next to that due to Christ's world-wide kingdom, shall be my country's."

It is worth our while to consider for a moment the civic duties of the followers of the Nazarene. Too many have considered religion as a matter relating to the future life or to one's self independently of his relations to his fellows; too many have been so absorbed in the contemplation of the rewards and punishments beyond that they have ignored the rewards and punishments which, as a part of the divine law, are enjoyed or suffered here.

Christ in reviewing the ten commandments condensed the six which refer to man's duties to his fellows into one great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"—a commandment which, if fully lived up to, would solve every problem: economic, social, political, and religious. Is it not wise to give more emphasis than we have to the manward part of Christ's teachings? James Gowdy Clark, whose songs have been such an inspiration to reformers, puts the question into poetic language when he asks:

"How long, O Lord, how long,  
Shall creeds conceal Thy human side,  
And Christ the God be crowned in song,  
While Christ the man is crucified."

How easy it would be to adjust quarrels within a church if each member entered the controversy with Christ's commandment fresh in his memory; how little friction there would be between different branches of the Christian church if that commandment was at all times uppermost in the thoughts of all the members!

Mr. Johnson includes among the duties of the Christian citizen "the payment of all taxes justly assessed." An observance of the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," would go even farther, and lead the citizen to return his property for assessment according to some just rule in order that he might be so assessed as to bear his fair share of the burdens of the govern-